

February 24, 2009

To: Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and Members of the Public Health Committee

From: Jack Edwards, 12 ½ year table games dealer at Foxwoods

Re: PB 5608 AAC The Issuance of Liquor Permits to Casinos that Permit Smoking in the C Casino

Good Afternoon, Senator Harris, Representative Ritter, and members of the Public Health Committee. My name is Jack Edwards. I have been working as a dealer at Foxwoods Casino for 12 ½ years. I'd like to thank the committee for this opportunity to address Proposed Bill 5608.

I speak not only for myself but also for my fellow employees who are here in their yellow shirts - the thousands of employees who were unable to make it here today but are definitely here with us in spirit.

While we hear about many different concerns & issues here today, let's remember the central core issue is health (our health) & a safe healthy work environment.

Currently on the casino gaming floor, dealers, pit clerks, cocktail servers, slot attendants, security and others are trying to earn a living, to support their families, while working in a toxic environment which is saturated with 2nd hand smoke.

While I acknowledge that Proposed Bill 5608 has been offered with the best of intentions, I must also emphatically state that as written it falls woefully short of protecting those workers or the patrons.

Additionally, the letter signed between the Mohegan Sun and the Governor protect those in the nongaming areas, but worsens the environmental conditions for those of us who have been up here for this & last legislative session seeking help. What a bitter irony that is.

While the Mohegan's arrangement would increase the "non smoking" gaming area to 20 %, all smokers on the property will be channeled to the other 80% of the gaming floor to congregate & have a smoke. The end result is smaller space with more smoke, unhealthier air, and sicker workers.

This is not an improvement to a healthier, safer work environment.

Additionally Proposed Bill 5608 does not provide an end date at which time smoking is once & for all eliminated from the casino. As a racing fan I appreciate that you don't know when the race is over if you don't know how many laps the race is. Likewise, how can we reach the goal of smoke free casinos if we have no end date established for full implementation?

I believe that the substitute language put forward by Attorney General Blumenthal addresses this problem & provides a reasonable compromise for full implementation that is fiscally responsible and politically feasible.

Since working at Foxwoods I myself have developed asthma and a chronic sinus condition for which I take daily medication - except on my days off.

In closing I ask the Public Health Committee to remember, when writing the final form of this bill, that the central core issue here is health, our health, the health of your constituents. Thank you.